

Blyth Kayak Club

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As we move forwards into 2017 we can look back on 2016 as another successful year for the kayak club. We have attracted a very welcome band of new members of diverse ages and all appear to be embracing the sport with gusto. Thanks to the more settled weather over the past year, water and weather conditions have been suitable for both river and sea paddling and members have enjoyed a range of locations and experiences.

Although not a highly competitive club, we have taken part in a number of races and events. As usual our annual visit to Durham resulted in huge success in the Durham to Finchale Abbey race with prizes being awarded to the club in a large number of categories. A number of members also attended a slalem event at Hexham and returned with four trophies. This is I think a first for the club and something that we will have to make a point of participating in this year. Two of our members also completed the Tay descent and were both first in their groups. There is a video of this event available to view on the SCA web-site.

We have supported many organisations over the past year with safety cover. This has included support on the water at the QE 2, Druridge and Kielder triathlons and open swims. Jelly beans and bacon sandwiches as well as other refreshments have been much appreciated on every occasion. Some of our members also had the most challenging task of policing the ducks at the annual Seaton Sluice Duck Race. Not easy when some of the ducks insisted of floating upstream! We have given our support to Paddleability events in the region as we do every year, all of which have been a great success. It is so rewarding to watch the participants thoroughly enjoying their paddling experience.

We have held a diverse range of club events this year and they have been well supported. Paddles out to Coquet Island have resulted in fabulous views of the seals and bird life, as has our paddle to Bass Rock and the nearby islands during our North Berwick camp. Our camp in the Lake District was well attended as was our paddle from Newburn to Tynemouth, always an interesting trip. Our Family Fun Day resulted in a host of new members and for once the weather was reasonably kind to us. Off the water we have enjoyed social family bowling nights which have been well attended and enjoyed by all

One of the memorable highlights for the club this year was the Tall Ships Event in Blyth. What a fabulous few days that turned out to be. Being able to kayak up the river and see all of the ships at very close quarters was a unique experience, with views of the ornate figureheads and carvings that were not able to be seen from the quayside. We look forward to taking part in the Blyth Maritime Festival this summer where hopefully there may be more interesting visitors to the river.

This report would not be complete without mention of the celebrity in our midst. We are extremely proud of the fact that our secretary, Allan Fitch, was awarded British Canoeing Impact on Disability Volunteer of the Year. Allan works tirelessly for the club and has done so for many years. He is always full of energy and enthusiasm. He tells us that he likes to be out kayaking so that he doesn't have to do any jobs at home, but we all know that he is just a big kid at heart and likes nothing more than messing about in the water! Thank you Allan for all of your hard work. The club really appreciates all that you do.

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Finally a huge thank you to all club supporters, whether you be a coach, a member of the committee, the mam or dad who stands and freezes on the river bank, or an active participant. The club would not exist without you.

Pat Jones

Chairperson